

## **Alaska Reading First Selection Criteria For Awarding Subgrants**

### ***Readiness as a critical element of success***

Research shows that readiness is an essential ingredient in effective professional development, especially professional development that guides implementation of new programs and strategies. The Alaska Reading First subgrant application process includes the following two components designed to assist eligible districts in determining which eligible schools are ready to be part of their district's Reading First application:

- An orientation meeting to familiarize districts with the requirements for Reading First Schools, and
- A School Readiness Tool to help districts gauge the willingness of school staff and the capacity of school leadership to embrace and implement the required components of Reading First. This process will help assure that only schools ready for Reading First will become Reading First Schools. Districts will use the School Readiness Tool and their knowledge of Reading First requirements to inform and support their decisions about which schools to include in their applications.

### **STEP ONE: Orientation**

Eligible districts are required to have a district administrator attend the orientation audio conference on October 15, 2003 and again on October 16, 2003\*, in order to apply for the Reading First grant. Principals of eligible schools are also invited to attend. Topics to be covered during the audio conference include:

- Criteria for school eligibility
- Overview of Reading First components and requirements
- Overview of accountability and criteria for future funding based on continuous improvement
- Overview of the School Readiness Tool

### **STEP TWO: Each district will administer the School Readiness Tool to all school staff in those schools meeting the Reading First eligibility requirements.**

The School Readiness Tool, adapted from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory survey, is based on the Reading First Guidance and is a useful device to help districts determine whether a school is ready to study and implement the components of Reading First. The School Readiness Tool surveys the principal, all K-3 teachers, special education teacher(s), Title 1 teacher(s), and teacher(s) of English language learners, on Reading First criteria such as the following:

- Fluency-based progress monitoring assessment system
- Frequent classroom assessments to inform instruction
- Direct/explicit instruction
- Coaching/mentoring
- Small group flexible instruction for all students
- Selecting from among research-based reading programs
- Leadership capacity and commitment.

### **STEP THREE: Districts send Letter of Intent to Apply to EED**

By November 17, 2003, districts will provide a letter of intent to apply for each of the schools the district has determined is ready, using the School Readiness Tool criteria. This intent to apply contains a commitment statement from each member of the selected eligible school staff that indicates willingness to participate fully in the Reading First grant as a staff member of a Reading First School. Districts will also return a form with a summary of the School Readiness Tool results from eligible schools that the district has determined are not yet ready to be part of the district's Reading First grant application and the reasons why that determination has been made based on the School Readiness Tool criteria. In addition to the letter of intent to apply, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development may conduct a site visit to the selected eligible schools.

### **STEP FOUR: Mandatory Grant Writing Audio conference for Eligible Districts/Schools**

Each eligible district must attend with at least one, preferably two or more, district administrators who will oversee the writing of the district's grant application to the Mandatory Grant Writing audio conferences scheduled for December 3 and 4, 2003. Teams from the eligible schools that have been selected by their districts must also attend the Mandatory Grant Writing audio. Each of the selected schools team should comprise of not more than eight staff that should include the following members: the school principal, a teacher from Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, the Title I teacher, the Special Education teacher, and a teacher of English language learners (if applicable). The audio workshop will prepare the district and school teams to address each of the following sections in their grant application:

- Scientifically based reading research requirements of Reading First
- The full range of reading assessments (e.g., screening, diagnosis, progress monitoring, outcomes)
- Comprehensive, supplemental, and intervention reading programs
- Characteristics of a Reading First Classroom
- Accountability.

### **STEP FIVE: Application Due Date**

By January 9 2004, no later than 4:30 pm., each district will submit an application to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development on behalf of selected schools.

This process is designed to identify and place, in priority order, schools from the applicant pool that demonstrate the greatest need, capacity, motivation, and commitment to participate in the Reading First program. Under this plan, 13-14 schools will receive Reading First support. In addition to these schools, EED plans to invite other eligible school sites to the statewide professional development institutes. Thus, increasing the total number of schools that are receiving Reading First professional development that is based on SBRR.